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ABSTRACT

Addressing the issue of teachers' low expectations for students of color and students in poverty poses significant challenges to teachers and teacher education alike. This article presents core elements of preparing teachers for culturally relevant practice based on an extensive review of current research in the field. It builds on the key groundwork of researchers such as Villegas (1991) and Zeichner (1996) and emphasizes the value of critical self-awareness as an emerging and essential component for the development of cultural competence among preservice teachers. This analysis warrants an increased emphasis on the importance of preservice teachers having a clear sense of their socialized identities and the relationship between those identities and one's understanding of socioeconomic inequities. Therefore, not only do preservice teachers need to become competent in their subject matter and teaching methodology, but they also need to work through the personal and social realities of race and class and their pedagogical implications. The challenge for teacher educators is to prepare all teachers to be culturally competent, self-aware instructors in order to address the long-standing crisis in education for students of color and students in poverty. (Contains 35 references.) (SM)

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Core Elements of Preparing Teachers for Culturally Relevant Practice

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Abstract

Addressing the issue of teachers' low expectations of students of color and students in poverty poses significant challenges to teachers and teacher educators alike. This article presents core elements of preparing teachers for culturally relevant practice based on an extensive review of current research in the field. It builds on the key groundwork of researchers such as Villegas (1991) and Zeichner (1996), and emphasizes the value of critical self-awareness as an emerging and essential component for the development of cultural competence among pre-service teachers. This analysis warrants an increased emphasis on the importance of pre-service teachers having a clear sense of their socialized identities and the relationship between those identities and one's understanding of socio-economic inequities. Therefore, not only do pre-service teachers need to become competent in their subject matter and teaching methodology, but they also need to work through the personal and social realties of race and class and their pedagogical implications. The challenge for teacher educators is to prepare all teachers to be culturally competent self-aware instructors in order to address the long-standing crisis in education for students of color and student in poverty.

Core Elements of Preparing Teachers for Culturally Relevant Practice

> African American students are suffering in our schools at an alarming rate. They continue to experience high drop-out, suspension, and expulsion rates. Although possessing a high school diploma is no guarantee of success in U.S. society, not having one spells certain economic and social failure. (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 212)

This long-standing crisis in education for African American children also disproportionately affects Latino and Native American children and significantly affects children living in poverty. The 2000 National Assessment of Educational Progress fourth grade reading results indicate that while more than 70% of White children across the nation read at or above grade level, only 37% of African American fourth graders do. Results are similarly discouraging for Latino and Native American children, 42% and 43% respectively, as they are for children from low-income families, 40% (Donahue, Finnegan, Lutkus, Allen, & Campbell, 2001). The socio-economic inequities that have created this crisis of access and equity in education are deeply rooted in broad social and institutional issues that have an effect on schools and teachers. They play a significant role in shaping teacher beliefs, attitudes, and expectations of students of color and students in poverty and how those students should be taught. These socialized beliefs left unexamined can produce devastating consequences, as evidenced by the over-representation of African American children in special education. In examining this phenomenon, Bondy and Ross (1998) present some of the myths held by many White pre-service teachers, which contribute to their belief that many African American children require special education. These myths include a belief that poor African American students fail because their parents do not care about their education, that they are unmotivated and uncooperative, and that they have

grown up with few literacy experiences. These myths, clearly derived from social stereotypes of African Americans and low-income families, perpetuate low teacher expectations and intensify an already disturbing picture of low student achievement.

Addressing the issue of teachers' low expectations of students of color and students in poverty poses significant challenges to teachers and teacher educators alike and raises two essential questions: What are the qualities of effective teachers of students of color and students in poverty and how can those qualities be developed through teacher preparation programs? There is a growing body of research documenting ways teachers can make a real difference in the lives of children of color and children in poverty and demonstrating that teachers can work with students to challenge socio-economic inequities, succeed academically and retain pride in their cultural backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 1994). This article attempts to address these vital questions and present core elements for preparing culturally competent teachers, those who are effective with students of color and students in poverty. These elements are grounded in an extensive review of multiple literatures including culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy, antiracist pedagogy, teaching for diversity, multicultural education, and White identity, among others. The analysis of this research has resulted in proposing several core elements teachers and teacher educators need to consider in confronting the educational crises affecting students of color and students in poverty. While there are five elements essential in helping teacher candidates examine their beliefs as they relate to their pedagogical practices, two of these elements will be emphasized in-depth; the relationship between identity, culture and pedagogy, and the awareness of socio-economic inequities and how schooling plays a role in perpetuating those inequities. Without an awareness that individual identity and beliefs are constructed

by one's social environment and an awareness of entrenched economic inequities in contemporary society, teachers have little chance of being successful with students of color and students in poverty.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Much of the literature addressing issues of preparing teachers for teaching students of color and students in poverty is increasingly focused on culturally relevant pedagogy. Ladson-Billings (1992) has defined culturally relevant pedagogy as that which empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. She argues that it urges collective action grounded in cultural understandings, experiences and ways of knowing the world, and differentiates it from critical pedagogy, which seeks to help the individual critique and change the social environment. Based on observations of culturally relevant teachers, Ladson-Billings (1994) found that when students are treated as competent they are likely to demonstrate competence, when teachers provide instructional scaffolding students can move from what they know to what they need to know, and that effective teaching involves in-depth knowledge of both students and subject matter. There is a common myth that the aim of culturally relevant pedagogy is simply to enhance students' self-esteem. Although that may be one outcome, Shujaa (1995) asserts that the actual intent of culturally relevant pedagogy is to increase student achievement, to help students develop the skills to achieve economic self-sufficiency, and to develop citizenship skills based on a realistic and thorough understanding of the political system. In short, it is about gaining access.

The complex and substantive demands of culturally relevant pedagogy pose an urgent challenge to teacher preparation, especially since the demographic reality is one of

an increasingly diverse student population. In 1999, only 63% of all elementary and high school students were White, while in that same year one out of every five elementary and high school students had one foreign-born parent. (Jamieson, Curry & Martinez, 2001). In many areas of the country, new teachers are more frequently being asked to teach students who may have very different backgrounds and life experiences from their own. Based on the *1993 - 1994 Schools and Staffing Survey*, 87% of all elementary and secondary teachers were White (Henke, Choy, Geis & Broughman, 1996) and according to the 1995 American Association of College of Teacher Education *Survey of Teacher Education Enrollments by Race/Ethnicity and Gender*, 80.5% of all students enrolled in teacher education programs were White. This demographic reality makes it necessary for teacher preparation programs to better prepare their teacher candidates for the diversity of students they will teach. In trying to understand how to grapple with the cultural disconnects between predominantly White middle class teachers and their culturally and economically diverse students, researchers have been focused on trying to identify the essential areas teachers need to gain competency in to be effective in those contexts. In a review of literature on culturally responsive pedagogy, Villegas (1991) identified several cultural criteria to assess teachers' cultural competence. These criteria included evidence that teachers respect cultural differences and believe that all students are capable of learning; know the cultural resources of their students and are aware of the culture of their own classrooms; implement an enriched curriculum for all students; build bridges between instructional content, material and methods, and the cultural backgrounds of students (scaffolding); and are aware of cultural differences when evaluating students. Zeichner (1996) built on these criteria in outlining elements of effective teachers of culturally diverse students and

effective program elements of teacher preparation programs focused on preparing teachers for a culturally diverse society. He emphasized the need for teachers to understand socio-cultural development and second-language acquisition; to know how socioeconomic circumstances, language, and culture shape educational experiences; to realize that knowing one's own ethnic and cultural identity can result in a better understanding of students' identities; and to make a concerted effort to increase parent involvement in their classrooms.

Core Elements in Preparing Teachers for Culturally Relevant Practice

There is continued support of the criteria and elements put forth by Villegas (1991) and Zeichner (1996), especially the need for teachers holding high expectations, scaffolding from home to school, and involving parents and community members in schools. These three elements are essential to increasing teachers' effectiveness with students of color and students in poverty; however, the literature also warrants an increased emphasis on the importance of teachers having a clear sense of their own ethnic, socio-economic, and cultural identities and its relationship to their understanding of socio-economic inequities. Thus, successful teaching of students of diverse backgrounds calls for teachers who:

Understand relationships between identity, culture and pedagogy.

Are aware of socio-economic inequities and how schooling plays a role in perpetuating them.

Maintain high expectations for all students.

Provide meaningful curriculum and are able to scaffold from home to school.

Understand, appreciate and involve parents and communities.

While each of these elements is essential, understanding relationships between identity, culture and pedagogy, and being aware of the role of schooling in perpetuating socio-economic inequities are critical to increasing the number of teachers who can be effective with students of color and students in poverty. It is of value to explore these first two elements in greater detail since they are rudimentary to how teachers choose to teach students of color and students in poverty and how teacher educators prepare teachers to teach these students. Addressing relationships of identity, culture and pedagogy and issues of socio-economic inequity and schooling connect the more personal and social dimensions of teaching. An examination of these important dimensions can complicate and sophisticate teachers' understandings of the remaining three elements, resulting in less paternalistic and more authentic engagements with students. It can allow teachers to see that they are socially constructed beings and that schools and classrooms are microcosms of larger societies, which may in turn result in them understanding high expectations, scaffolding, and parent involvement as more than educational buzzwords with predictable and measured outcomes. It is possible that they will become aware that their expectations of students are affected by the ways they have been socialized as individuals and as teachers. This may then allow them to appreciate that their ability to scaffold with students is dependent on a deep understanding of their students, beyond what they have come to know through socialized and filtered means. These teachers would have the opportunity to recognize that involving parents and community members requires reciprocal relationships with them. Examining personal and social dimensions of teaching demands teachers with a commitment to investigate their beliefs about themselves, their students, and education and where those beliefs come from. It requires teachers who are

willing to learn from the school communities where they teach to better understand their students and integrate these elements into their teaching. It could be argued that most teacher education programs give students the opportunity to explore these ideas through social foundations courses. However, the crucial issue at hand lies in whether that content is wedded to the practice of teaching in such a way that students can see how these individual and social issues have real implications for everyday pedagogical practice. Rather than having courses that segregate the historical, philosophical and social factors that shape schooling and pedagogy from courses that look at the practice of teaching, teacher candidates would benefit from an integration of the two over several courses.

Effective teachers of students of color and students in poverty have an awareness of the social construction of their identities and those of their students and what those identities represent in broader social contexts. (Banks & McGee Banks, 1995; Bondy & Ross, 1998; Canella & Reiff, 1994; Chapman, 1996; Haberman, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995; Kailin, 1994; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Mazzei, 1997; Montecinos, 1994). These teachers are aware that identity is shaped by cultural experiences and that both the individual and the cultures they represent have an impact on teaching and learning. This becomes especially poignant in the case of White middle class teachers, where there is a need for them to recognize what they symbolize and regardless of who they may be individually, their whiteness, along with the power and privilege it embodies, will be one of the first things that defines them. They need to come to terms with issues of representation and how their whiteness shapes the way they see students of color and students in poverty. Consequently, not only do teachers need to be competent in their subject matter and teaching methodologies, but they also need to address the personal and social realties of

race and class and their pedagogical implications. It requires middle class White teachers to acknowledge that social systems and specifically schools are inequitable and that in many cases they have personally benefited from this inequity.

Understanding Relationships between Identity, Culture and Pedagogy: Inservice Teachers

Responding in large part to the fact that the majority of teachers continue to be White and that these White teachers will be teaching increasingly diverse students, there is a growing body of literature on issues of whiteness and its implications for White teachers teaching culturally diverse and culturally different students (Mazzei, 1997; Lawrence & Bunch, 1996; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Olmedo, 1997). This research calls for teachers to acknowledge the relationship between identity, culture and pedagogy for themselves and their students. In examining initiatives in several U.S. school districts to integrate African and/or African American content into the curriculum to make instruction more culturally relevant for African American students, Shujaa (1995) found that in order to support culturally relevant teaching, professional development must be directed toward enabling teachers to focus on their conceptions of themselves and others, their cultural knowledge, and their classrooms' social structure. Shujaa (1995) contends that culturally relevant pedagogy is more than an infusion of content. It requires teachers to recognize who they are racially, culturally and economically as individuals and how they have learned to view others who are racially and culturally different from themselves.

Creating opportunities for middle class White teachers, who rarely have to question their socialization or social position, to critically examine racial identity and socio-economic inequity can have a significant impact on their practice and alter their pedagogical decisions. In a study of 84 White suburban inservice teachers involved in an antiracist

professional development project, Lawrence and Tatum (1997) found that 48 of the participants took 142 antiracist actions as a result of learning about personal, cultural and institutional manifestations of racism and how they could counteract its effects in schools. These actions included instructional changes such as teaching students to critically examine cultural stereotypes and making the curriculum more inclusive and representative of all students' backgrounds. In particular they noted how one middle school social studies teacher, who had included the history of African Americans as an oppressed minority, now also emphasized the resistance of African Americans to that oppression. The professional development program helped this teacher make a pedagogical decision that offered a more complicated picture of history and at the same time supported racial identity development theory by allowing his African American students to see history and themselves in more complex ways. Outside of the classroom, teachers encouraged the formation of cultural groups and support groups for students of color. Teachers applied their understanding of racial identity development from the professional development program in their interactions with students and sought out further education about racial identity and related issues.

It is important to acknowledge that exploring the connections between identity, culture and pedagogy is essential for all teachers, since teachers and students belong to a host of micro-cultures (Gollnick, 1992). Therefore, even if efforts to recruit and retain students of color in teacher preparation programs are successful and there is an increase in their number, the need to bridge cultural knowledge and pedagogy is still of great importance (Zeichner, 1996). This also holds true for teachers who share a significant part of their cultural background with students. It cannot be assumed that teachers can easily

translate cultural knowledge into culturally relevant pedagogy (Montecinos, 1995). Although a teacher may share many cultural aspects with his or her students, including racial or ethnic background, other differences, such as socio-economics, can create challenges for teachers. Hence there is a need to work with all teachers to become aware of the many cultures they are a part of and how it might affect their teaching and their students' learning. Cadray and McAllister (1998) studied eleven diverse practicing teachers who participated in CULTURES, Center for Urban Learning/Teaching and Urban Research in Education and Schools at Emory University, a professional development program that has teachers examine their own cultures and how they relate to their practice and then learn about other cultures by visiting diverse classrooms and communities. They found that as a result of the program most of the teachers changed their views towards cultural differences and in some cases it resulted in teachers using cross-cultural behaviors in their classrooms by infusing various cultural perspectives in the curriculum, encouraging children to learn about other cultures, and using interpreters for meetings with parents. The pre and post interviews were designed to assess what stage the teachers were in according to the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1993). These stages include denial of difference, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration. The researchers found that before the program, most of the teachers were interested in different cultures and were in the acceptance stage, but after the program they were more interested in the relationship between culture and teaching, moving toward the adaptation stage. This research supports the importance of teachers examining their own identities in order to better understand themselves and their students.

Understanding Relationships between Identity, Culture and Pedagogy: Pre-service Teachers

There is also strong support for integrating the examination of relationships between identity, culture and pedagogy into pre-service programs. Zimpher and Ashburn (1992) call for programs to be caring and collaborative learning communities that foster continuous discourse about the pedagogical implications of diversity. They assert that if teacher education programs do not integrate such discourse, the chances of White middle class students to believe or act differently from the ways in which they were taught are unlikely. To do this Zimpher and Ashburn (1992) suggest that teacher education programs be learner centered, driven by the prior knowledge and experiences of students and at the same time aim to expand students' range of vision in terms of cultural perspective. Fox and Gay (1995) echo this point in their review of literature on developing culturally responsive teachers. They assert that prospective teachers will be more likely to implement culturally responsive pedagogy if they learn as they are expected to teach. They further argue that to be effective, the learning activities and experiences on issues of diversity must be developmentally appropriate for students, responding to their different stages of intellectual and affective maturity with respect to cultural diversity in the educational process. This is a call for teacher education to employ culturally relevant pedagogy, which includes using students' understandings and experiences as a starting point and scaffolding students to that which they need to know in order to implement culturally relevant pedagogy themselves.

In order to help teacher candidates scaffold from their own experiences to learning culturally relevant practice, many pre-service programs have teacher candidates engage in

an in-depth examination of their own identity. Hyun (1997) studied this strategy with prospective teachers in courses from four different stages in an early childhood and elementary education program. Students engaged in self-inquiry, which included small and large group discussions sharing their experience of conducting an autobiographical self-examination of their ethnicity and family culture. Participants were also required to express their thoughts in a journal and produce a self-reflective evaluation statement. In analyzing the journals, Hyun (1997) found that students developed a conceptual sense of perspective-taking ability other than oneself and saw a connection between who they were culturally and how that might affect their pedagogy. Another strategy for creating opportunities for teacher candidates to examine their identity utilizes multicultural literature. Metcalf-Turner and Smith (1999) found that this method was effective because it first asked pre-service teachers to listen to multiple viewpoints through voices in stories and then asked them to examine their own perceptions and beliefs. This seemed to provide a sort of distance that allowed them to begin to deal with previously held prejudices and stereotyped attitudes toward people from cultural and linguistic backgrounds different from their own. Rather than have students examine the perceptions of those that they thought were unlike themselves, Olmedo (1997) had pre-service students read several works of White teachers examining their personal and cultural identities and the impact they had on their teaching. In reflecting on his own experience, after having read these works, one student noted,

> Do I have preconceived notions regarding children because of their skin, economic background, sex, or the place they live? I remember when I first met Richard at school ... I quickly began talking to him about basketball ... Did I assume that

> because Richard was black he liked basketball? When I met Samuel (a White child), ... I talked to him about school, work, and drawing. It is something I should think about and be aware of. (Olmedo, 1997, p. 253)

As evidenced in journal writing, White students began to consider how their identities and socialized beliefs might affect their teaching and to question their assumptions about urban students and schools. They also documented their observations of their cooperating teachers and questioned their cultural assumptions and the impact they had on students. Although much of the literature focuses on White pre-service students, Montecinos (1994) found that teacher candidates of color who attended predominantly White K-12 schools and who had little exposure to multicultural education also needed effective multicultural training. Research suggests that having pre-service teachers engage in self-examination and making connections to pedagogical practice needs to be ongoing. Single courses are not enough to affect the long-term behavior of teachers and in the best case scenario courses devoted to these kinds of issues only serve as starting points. (Lawrence & Bunche, 1996)

Awareness of Socio-economic Inequities and How Schooling Plays a Role in Perpetuating Them: In-service Teachers

A good deal of research on effective teachers of students of color and students in poverty demonstrates that there are ways that teachers can make a difference and assist in increasing their students' academic achievement. Ladson-Billings (1992) found that teachers who were successful with African American students, those identified by parents as teachers who encouraged children to choose academic excellence and allowed students to maintain their cultural identity, were aware of the position of African Americans in society

and how it affects expectations of students. These teachers were concerned about the inequities in society and schooling. They saw their role as helping students see these inequities and used pedagogy that was liberating, rather than maintaining the status quo, by explicitly teaching students how to gain social and political access. Ladson-Billings (1992) found them to be cognizant that they were political beings and were involved in groups both in and out of the school advocating equity. From additional research on successful teachers of African American students, Ladson-Billings (1995) has found that these teachers encourage individual achievement and help students develop a broader socio-political consciousness allowing them to critique cultural norms, values and institutions that produce and maintain socio-economic inequities. Villegas (1991) found that although successful teachers of culturally diverse students were aware of the institutional obstacles that many of their students faced, they did not adopt a pessimistic outlook toward their students' ability to achieve. On the contrary many were quite explicit in working with students to understand these obstacles and worked with them to learn strategies to deal with them. Villegas (1991) argues that beginning teachers need to demonstrate that they believe all students are capable of learning and that they believe they are capable of making a difference in the educational lives of children. Chapman (1996) studied an intervention project to increase student achievement amongst culturally diverse students in an elementary school. The project included teacher workshops on school practices that perpetuate inequity and ways teachers could build on students' cultural backgrounds to increase achievement. They examined such things as tracking, the relationship between teacher expectations and student performance, and decontextualized instruction. As a result of these workshops and others, at the end of the eight-month

project, teachers' rating of students' academic progress on report cards demonstrated that many students moved from "unsatisfactory", to "needs improvement", and then to "satisfactory". In every instance where a student moved from one level of achievement to another, the move was positive. (Chapman, 1996) This type of data reveals the importance of raising teachers' awareness about their beliefs, but also suggests the importance of giving teachers professional development opportunities that then connect that awareness to teaching strategies that will be effective with students of color and students in poverty.

Awareness of Socio-economic Inequities and How Schooling Plays a Role in Perpetuating Them: Pre-service Teachers

The issue of socio-economic inequity plays a significant role in teaching, as well as teacher preparation. Teacher education programs need to foster the understanding that teaching and learning occur in socio-political contexts that are not neutral, but based on relations of power and privilege. (Zeichner, Grant & Gay, 1998) Teacher candidates need to examine their identities and how those have been constructed by their social and cultural circumstances. Understanding their socialized selves and how that shapes their understandings of others and how they relate to students is critical. The Teachers for Alaska program attempts to do this through the examination of case studies that highlight true-life stories of teachers facing dilemmas in culturally diverse classrooms and communities. Students also write their own cases about the experience of student teaching to help gain distance from what are often arduous experiences. This strategy allows them to conceptualize the experience and learn from it. In studying this program, Kleinfeld (1998) found that at the start only 28% of the students took into account culturally different students' frame of reference versus 83% at the program's end. However, working

with teacher candidates to recognize and address socio-economic inequity is challenging. In a study of a White middle-aged female teacher candidate's undergraduate experience in an elementary education program, Cannella and Reiff (1994) found that although the teacher candidate was concerned about issues of diversity and equity in her first two years of the program, as she entered her practicum and student teaching experiences classroom practicalities, like lesson planning and discipline, took precedence. They concluded that there were implicit messages in the program that classroom practicalities were more important than examining issues of equity and how to remedy them. They pose an important question in their conclusion: "What messages and skills are we really providing for future teachers? 'Survive in the system!' or 'Create a new system . . ." (Canella & Reiff, 1994, p. 33). While teachers' awareness of relationships between identity, culture, and pedagogy and the relationship between socio-economic inequity and schooling are critical in order for them to do more than survive, they are also essential for teachers to be able to provide students of color and students in poverty with academically rigorous and culturally relevant educational experiences.

Implications for Research and Practice

A great deal of the literature on culturally relevant pedagogy concentrates on elementary education, leaving a dearth of examples of culturally relevant teaching in high school settings. This may indicate that there are few examples or that the examples are imbedded in studies that focus on other types of pedagogies, such as critical pedagogy. It would be worthwhile to better understand how culturally relevant pedagogy takes shape in high schools and how that might affect the academic achievement of students of color and students in poverty. Investigating how this approach may have the potential to decrease

drop-out rates, increase academic achievement and better prepare students for success in college is a worthy research agenda. While some research (Trueba, 1991; Sheets, 1995) seems to indicate that culturally relevant pedagogy can affect these important measures, the number of studies is too limited to make solid claims. Examples of culturally relevant teaching in teacher education are equally sparse. Some research focuses on integrating the exploration of personal and social identity into teacher education, but little directly addresses shaping teacher education programs so that pre-service teachers can experience and practice culturally relevant pedagogy.

How can the principles of culturally relevant pedagogy be used in teacher education? Sia and Mosher (1994) contend that prospective teachers' beliefs have a great impact on their attitudes and behaviors towards culturally different students, therefore teacher educators need to make beliefs an important feature of preparation programs and legitimate sources of inquiry. To do so teacher educators will need to examine their own beliefs about those who are culturally different before working with students on these issues. Consequently, the challenge of culturally relevant pedagogy is not just in the teaching of elementary students of color and students in poverty, but in the teaching of all students, including teacher candidates.

The challenge includes scaffolding teacher candidates from their own experiences and beliefs to sophisticated understandings of educational access and equity and how those issues shape pedagogical practices. Teacher candidates should have the opportunity to become familiar with the critical discourses of social foundations, examining the historical, philosophical and sociological aspects of education, heightening teacher candidates' awareness of their socialization and of socio-economic inequities, and fostering an

understanding of how instructional methods are shaped by these forces. Teacher education can often be a series of isolated courses rather than a program reflecting the integrated nature of teaching, lacking explicit connections between the social contexts of schooling, the actual content taught, and the methods used to teach that content. In order for students of color and students in poverty to have access to educational equity they need teachers who possess a deep understanding of content and an ability to translate that deep understanding into their teaching (Zimpher & Ashburn, 1992). Therefore, in grappling with understanding how to prepare teachers to recognize and address inequities, it cannot be divorced from the subject matter teachers are expected to teach.

Some teacher education programs have begun to address the complex task of preparing teachers for culturally relevant practice in their program goals and course outlines, but whether this translates into actual practice is a key concern. Programs are making attempts to respond to the literature on culturally relevant pedagogy and in turn are emphasizing issues of identity, culture, and pedagogy, as well as socio-economic inequity, but the real test is in providing courses and experiences that authentically support those goals. Research on culturally relevant pedagogy indicates that teachers can make a difference in the academic lives of children and that teacher education programs can prepare teachers for that challenge. It also suggests that even though there may be some universal elements in the teaching of students of color and students in poverty, as Zeichner (1996) suggests, each community, school, and classroom requires attention to its particular context. Reducing teaching or the preparation of teachers to several core elements can be misleading if those elements are translated into a list of behaviors that will produce certain success. Any such compression of teaching inherently carries limitations, since it cannot

encompass the nuances and complexities of each classroom, teacher, and student. However, there is a very real need for these condensed understandings of what is essential for increasing the academic achievement of students of color and students in poverty in order to help teachers and teacher educators begin to address this long-standing crisis in education. Addressing this crisis requires a considerable amount of flexibility and sophistication on the part of teachers and teacher educators. It calls for a strong sense of self, an awareness of how broader socio-economic issues affect teaching and learning, and a thorough understanding of subject matter and pedagogy.

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